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DOCTOR CURRIE,

OF LIVERPOOL.

JAMES CURRIE, M. D. is the only son of a clergyman of the church of Scotland, whose father also exercised the pastoral office in that part of the county of Dumfries, named Annandale. In the *manse*, or parsonage house, which had descended as by inheritance from his grandfather to his father, the subject of the present memoir was born in the year 1756.

The Scottish nation enjoys an invaluable advantage in the institution of parochial schools, where youths receive, upon the easiest terms, the rudiments of a good education. In the school of his parish, and under the inspection of his father, Dr. C. entered upon his grammatical and classical studies. When he had attained the thirteenth year of his age, he was sent to the school of Dumfries, which was then conducted by Dr. Chapman, so well known by his work on education. In Dr. Chapman's house he resided as a boarder; and, after going through the regular course of the school, he continued, under the superintendance of the Doctor, to prosecute his studies in the mathematics. If, from the maturity of a plant, we may form an idea of its early culture, we may be justified in supposing, that Dr. Currie enjoyed considerable advantages in the assiduities of his tutor, and that he improved these advantages to the utmost.

The disposition of the northern Britons to emigrate into climes more promising than their own, has been

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so frequent a subject of wit, that the shrewdest mode of hinting the fact now scarcely provokes a smile. We shall, therefore, simply state, that Dr. C. participated, with a large portion of his countrymen, in the spirit of adventure, in consequence of which, he went to Virginia, in the service of a company of merchants.

His voyage to the American continent was far from being auspicious. Soon after his arrival, the jealousies which the American states had long entertained of the oppressive projects of the British ministry, stipulated them to publish the most spirited resolutions; in consequence of which, the trade between America and England was entirely interrupted. This circumstance at once clouded the flattering prospects of our young adventurer, who went, at the commencement of the troubles, to reside with a near relation, an eminent physician in the colony.

Mercantile pursuits being thus fatally embarrassed by the agitation of the times, Mr. C. determined to change his views in life, and to adopt the profession of medicine to which he had been originally destined. In pursuance of this design, he resolved to go through a regular course of study, at the University of Edinburgh. He accordingly bid adieu to America, and, as direct communication with Britain was obstructed, he went by way of the West Indies to London. At this busy metropolis he arrived sometime in the course of the year 1776.

After a short stay in London, he repaired to Edinburgh, and began his academic studies. These he prosecuted

prosecuted with great vigour, and unremitting assiduity, till the spring of 1780.

At this period divers cogent reasons urged him to wish to enter into some active employment. His friends encouraged him to hope that he might be appointed on the staff of the army as a physician; and a medical establishment being at that time about to be formed for the army in Jamaica, it was thought advisable that he should stand candidate for the appointment of physician, or assistant physician, to the hospital: but, before solicitation for his appointment could be made with propriety, it was absolutely necessary that the candidate should have taken his degree. Though M. C. had studied at Edinburgh three years, the time necessary to qualify him to apply for the honour of graduation, there are only two days on which medical degrees are conferred in that University. The urgency of the occasion not permitting Mr. C. to wait for the recurrence of the nearest of these days, he took his degree at Glasgow, and immediately began the disagreeable work of soliciting for the appointment which his friends had inspired him with hope of obtaining.

The retired habits of assiduous study, and the scrupulous nicety of a man of elevated mind were but ill calculated to procure the favour of numerous or powerful patrons. From some of the professors of the University, however, and from those of his fellow students with whom he had formed an acquaintance, Dr. Currie was furnished with ample and honourable testimonials, and with the most urgent letters

ters of introduction and recommendation. But, on his arrival in London, he found that the appointment, the object of his wishes, was already disposed of. At the instance of Mr. Surgeon-general Adair, it had been conferred on a young Irish physician, a gentleman of indisputable merit.

Vestigia nulla retrorsum seems to be the motto of the major part of the men of talents who quit the barren mountains of Caledonia. The Doctor being disappointed in his hopes of preferment in the medical staff, resolved, at all events, to go to Jamaica, and attempt to establish himself in that island as a physician. He accordingly took his passage in a vessel which was expected soon to sail in company with a numerous fleet. Various circumstances delayed the sailing of this fleet, and, consequently, caused the Doctor to pass the summer of 1780 in London.

During this interval of delay, he was encouraged by his friends, whose numbers and zeal encreased in proportion as he was known, to think of settling as a physician in some part of England. In the course of his enquiries after an eligible situation, he visited various places. At length, in the latter end of 1780, a vacancy being occasioned in the medical profession at Liverpool, by the removal of Dr. Dobson to Bath, Dr. C. repaired to the former place, where he soon met with very great encouragement.

In the year 1783 he married the daughter of a very respectable merchant of the town of Liverpool.

In the ensuing year, his growing usefulness was very seriously impeded by a dangerous illness, which

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was occasioned by the exertions and anxieties of friendship.

The most affectionate intimacy subsisted between him and the ingenious Dr. Bell, then resident at Manchester. During an alarming illness of his friend, which unfortunately terminated in his death, Dr. Currie paid him several visits. The fatigue occasioned by the rapid mode in which a physician of rising practice, is in a manner obliged to make distant journies, occasioned an inflammatory fever, which reduced him to the greatest extremity. The disorder settling on his lungs, brought on a cough, which for a long time threatened consumption. This illness disabled him from prosecuting his practice for at least the space of six months.

Though the event which has just been mentioned is, in reality, an event of serious importance in the life of a medical gentleman, it would not, perhaps, have been recorded in these memoirs, did it not give occasion to refer to a very interesting account of the Doctor's case, which was written by himself, and communicated to Dr. Darwin, who inserted it in the 2d volume of his Zoonomia, p. 293. Dr. Darwin introduces it with the following respectful notice of the author.

"The following case of hereditary consumption is related by a physician of great ability and very extensive practice; and, as it is his own case, abounds with much nice observation and useful knowledge; and, as it has been attended with a favourable event, may give consolation to many who are in a similar situation,

situation, and shews that Sydenham's recommendation of riding as a cure for consumption is not so totally ineffectual as is now commonly believed."

The first exertion which Dr. C. made on the commencement of his recovery, was occasioned by his zeal to pay the tribute of affection to the memory of his deceased friend. He had received a request* from the Literary Society of Manchester, that he would translate the Inaugural Dissertation of Dr. Bell, and prefix to his translation, Memoirs of the Author's Life. This request was transmitted to him† in the month of February, 1784; but so long was the continuance of his debilitating illness, that the papers in question were not communicated to the society till March, 1785.

In publishing the Memoirs of Dr. Bell, Dr. Currie may be regarded as making his first appearance in the character of an author. In the memoirs themselves, however, there is not the least trace of internal evidence of a first appearance. The style is maturely formed, and possesses a correctness which is hardly to be expected but from the pen of a practised writer. Indeed it has not been excelled by the happiest of its author's subsequent writings. The concluding summary of Dr. Bell's character is a model of nice discrimination, and evinces a most accurate knowledge of the general principles of human nature. The delicate, yet exact, manner in which the defective traits of Dr. Bell's character are touched, beautifully exem-

* Memoirs of Manchester Society, vol. ii. p. 397.

† Vide Memoirs ut supra.

plifies

plifies the sternness of truth, controling the partial pencil of affection.

The inhabitants of the town of Liverpool have been long distinguished by the liberality with which they patronize charitable institutions. In the year 1785, a proposal was made to connect with the public Infirmary (of which Dr. C. was one of the physicians) an asylum for the reception of lunatics. This project the Doctor warmly recommended, in a letter which he published in Gore's Liverpool Advertiser, in the month of August, 1789. In a subsequent letter, dated October 15, 1789, he answered the objections which had been advanced against the proposed establishment. Both these letters are distinguished by luminousness of method, and chastity of style. The latter may be justly cited as an example of the candid and temperate discussion of a practical question of great importance—an example, alas! of rare occurrence: for, in these times of turbulence, discord mars the wisest and most benevolent projects; creating disorder not only on the grand arena of national contention, but on the petty stage of parochial litigation.

The friends of humanity will be happy to be informed, that the institution in question met with the most liberal patronage, and that the author of these memoirs had the satisfaction, on paying a visit to Liverpool, in the year 1791, to see, among other monuments of the munificent spirit of the inhabitants of that flourishing mart of commerce, a handsome and well planned edifice, fitted up for the reception

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of those who suffer under the pressure of the worst of human ills—"the mind diseased."

The Medical Society of London having elected Dr. C. one of their body, he communicated to them a paper on tetanus and convulsive disorders, which was read on the 10th of May, 1790, and published in the 3d volume of their memoirs. In this valuable communication, the Doctor recites the history of seven cases—the first and last of which are singularly curious and interesting. The paper is closed by a few judicious remarks.

In the year 1792, Dr. C. presented to the Royal Society *an Account of the remarkable Effects of a Shipwreck on the Mariners, with Experiments and Observations on the Influence of Immersion in fresh and salt Water, hot and cold, on the Powers of the living Body.* This paper was inserted in the Philosophical Transactions of the year in which it was received, and procured its author the honour of admission into the very respectable literary corporation to which it was communicated.

In the year 1798, Dr. C. laid before the public the result of much study and accurate observation, in a volume of *Medical Reports on the Effects of Water, cold and warm, as a remedy in Fever, and other Diseases.* The favourable reception which this publication experienced, in the medical world, is sufficiently evinced, by its having speedily advanced to a second edition, and by its having been translated into the German and French languages.

However delicate the topic may be, it is impossible to

to avoid adverting, on the present occasion, to the famous pamphlet, published in the year 1793, under the signature of Jasper Wilson. This pamphlet was universally ascribed to Dr. C.: and notwithstanding the illiberal but dangerous abuse heaped upon him by the defenders of ministry, which it would have been rashness to encounter without cause—and notwithstanding the high eulogiums which the credit of this book has procured him from the opponents of ministry, which it would have been natural for him to disclaim had his title to them been null: he has not, publicly, at least, disavowed the publication.

It is not a matter of surprize, that the celebrity of the putative author should have made Jasper Wilson's Letter to Mr. Pitt an object of extraordinary attention. The letter appeared at an awful crisis. The unguarded violence of the British partizans of revolutionary principles had drawn down upon their heads the asperity of ministerial vengeance, and the indignation of the public. Various convictions of persons accused of sedition, followed up by severe punishments, had alarmed all descriptions of the opponents of ministry. Serious warnings, indeed, were given to the *enragés*, and the more moderate were aware of the immense advantage which Mr. Pitt had gained, by identifying his administration with the constitution, and persuading the people, that an attack upon the former was an infringement on the latter. At this crisis great confidence was given to the friends of peace by the appearance of a letter, the author of

which, while he paid due respect to the principles of the constitution, freely and ably impugned the conduct of ministry in protracting the war, when its avowed objects, the protection of Holland, and the recapture of Brabant, had been obtained, and when the French were suing for peace. So rapid was the circulation of this pamphlet, that, in a very short space of time, it passed through three editions. If the anti-ministerialists spread the fame of J. W.'s letter by the loudness of their applause, the ministerialists contributed their full share to its celebrity by the vehemence of their abuse. This abuse, however, has not provoked a reply. In the rapid course of events, scenes more and more awful have arrested public attention, and J. W,'s letter may now be in a manner regarded as a tale of the times of old. It may now, perhaps, be examined with a dispassionate eye, and acknowledged to be a production worthy of a gentleman and a scholar; and though time, that tries all things, has, in some degree, confuted the commercial speculations of its author, yet the lapse of events has fatally proved, that his political predictions originated in the sagacity of a comprehensive mind.

It has been announced, in several literary journals, that Dr. C. is at present employed in writing the life of the celebrated Robert Burns, which is to be prefixed to a complete collection of the works of that astonishing genius, soon to be published for the benefit of his family. The Doctor is happy in a subject which will call into exercise accuracy of judgment

ment and delicacy of taste—nor is the deceased bard less fortunate in a biographer whose talents, it may be presumed, will do ample justice to his memory.

M. N.

THE DUKE OF BEDFORD.*

FRANCIS RUSSELL, Duke of Bedford, succeeded to that title in the year 1771, on the death of the late Duke, his grandfather; at which time he was only seven years of age. He lost both his parents about four years before; his father, the Marquis of Tavistock, having been killed by a fall from his horse in hunting, and the Marchioness dying not long after, from the effects of that melancholy event on her constitution, already extremely delicate.

One naturally trembles for the future moral worth, and intellectual excellence, of a youth in the situation of the Duke of Bedford on coming to his title; and, perhaps, the danger to his Grace was not a little increased, by his being left solely to the care of a grandmother (the late Duchess Dowager of Bedford), who scarcely placed any bounds to her fondness for him. The effects of the young Duke's situation soon appeared. He was sent to Westminster school, and taken home again on some cause of disgust, before

* This illustrious family may be traced back as far as the 5th year of Henry III. when one of their ancestors was constable of Corfe Castle, and many of them have filled, at various times, the most important offices of the state.

he had acquired those rudiments of learning that were to prepare him for the greater attainments becoming his station. That he acquired them at home is not to be doubted, from the figure he has since made; but the chances were against him. A public school is a useful scene for a boy of his Grace's rank and fortune; since it, in some degree, corrects the partialities and mistakes of those about him when at home. His Grace went to the University with the disadvantage of not being known for proficiency in such learning as young men carry to College: but he made a name for himself there, by his application and progress; and gained the esteem both of his fellow-students, and of all those who had the superintendance of their conduct.

Previous to the entrance of his Grace into life, a singular method is said to have been taken to secure him against the practices of the knaves of all ranks who prey on unwary youths of fortune. He was placed, according to common fame, under the guardianship and tuition of a nobleman advanced in years, and well known for his knowledge of the world, and his acquaintance with the wiles of gamblers. It is scarcely possible to devise a more dangerous expedient for such a case: but the Duke of Bedford escaped unhurt by the folly of the experiment, if it was really made; it being acknowledged that play has no other hold on his mind than that of an amusement kept within its due bounds.

When his Grace went on the tour of Europe, a circumstance occurred as singular, in its place, as the